



ADVISORY OPINION # 58

FORMULATED: September 2012

QUESTION: Is it within the role and scope of practice for APRNs to conduct assessments without physician collaboration or preceptors?

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina recognizes that APRNs receive advanced education and clinical training in health assessment as part of the foundation for APRN practice. The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina recognizes that health assessment is part of the graduate education, a masters or doctoral curriculum, and is required for APRN national certification. The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina also recognizes that assessments are conducted in a variety of settings to promote access to care including hospice, home health, office based, hospitals, mental health, and community organizations.

The State Board of Nursing further recognizes that the practice of APRN role includes the practice of registered nursing which includes performing assessments. According to the Nurse Practice Act:

"Practice of registered nursing" means the performance of health care acts in the nursing process that involve assessment, analysis, intervention, and evaluation. This practice requires specialized independent judgment and skill and is based on knowledge and application of the principles of biophysical and social sciences. The practice of registered nursing includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) assessing the health status of persons and groups;
- (b) analyzing the health status of persons and groups;...

<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t40c033.htm>.

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina further recognizes that traditionally assessments, not to include the interpretation of diagnostic data, have been conducted as part of the APRN scope of practice and are not considered a delegated act requiring or mandating physician collaboration or protocol. Currently, the Nurse Practice Act defines delegated medical acts as:

"Delegated medical acts" means additional acts delegated by a physician or dentist to the NP, CNM, or CNS and may include formulating a medical diagnosis and initiating, continuing, and modifying therapies, including prescribing drug therapy, under approved written protocols as provided in Section 40-33-34. Delegated medical acts must be agreed to jointly by both the Board of Nursing and the Board of Medical Examiners. Delegated medical acts must be performed under the general supervision of a physician or dentist who must be readily available for consultation."

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina, therefore, recognizes that delegated acts do not include conducting assessments but may include formulating medical diagnoses and prescribing as defined by the Nurse Practice Act. Thus, APRNs conducting assessments do not need a physician preceptor or collaboration.

This statement is an advisory opinion of the Board of Nursing as to what constitutes competent and safe APRN practice.